

**Community
Action to
Reach the
Elderly (& Disabled)
in San Diego County**



Winter 2006

For Information,
Call 1-800-510-2020

Postal Alert Remains Important Part of Project CARE

By Marty Dare
Project CARE Coordinator

After more than a dozen years, the unique safety net known as Project CARE is still in place and working to help folks live independently in their homes.

There is no other system like this in the country that has lasted so long, worked so well, and provided reassurance to so many people. Incredibly, there is no one organization that "owns" Project CARE. Partners all carry their own piece of the whole, which in turn depends upon the contributions of all participants.

Such a cooperative effort requires dedication and vigilance. This year, our Project CARE Advisory Committee recommended returning to our partnership roots... priming the pump so to speak. The time was right to re-invigorate old connections. One of the earliest partnerships -- forming the core of project services -- was Postal Alert. With letter carriers on the ground, the United States Postal Service has a virtual army of dedicated professionals who can keep an eye out for those in need. At our January

Project CARE meeting, we will hear how Project CARE and Postal Alert can continue their successful collaboration.

Also in January, we will hear from a "silent partner"

that has long supported Project CARE and many other services throughout the County. The Call Center at Aging & Independence Services handles 6,000 inquiries from the public each month. Its team of social workers is expert in assessing needs and guiding callers to the proper services, including those provided by Project CARE and its partners. Without this essential "neurotransmitter" function, many clients would never find us.

We also would like to take the time to say goodbye and best wishes to long-time friend Mary Davis from SDG&E who was recently promoted and will be handling other duties. Her leadership kept Vials of Life plentiful the last several years, and also helped our connections with the successful Cool Zones summer program. Thank you, Mary, and keep in touch!



The Jan. 16 Project CARE meeting will be held at a new site: USA Federal Credit Union, 9999 Willow Creek Rd., SD, 92131.

A Different CARE Program Aids Residents with Utility Costs

To help mitigate the impact of utility bills, the California Public Utilities Commission oversees a program called CARE (California Alternative Rates for Energy). CARE provides a 20 percent discount on monthly energy bills for income-qualified households.

Seniors (and others) living alone or with another person can have a yearly maximum household income of \$28,600 to qualify for CARE this year. The new guidelines for a household of three persons is \$33,600 and under. For four persons, the maximum

household income qualification now is \$40,500.

Other CARE eligibility requirements include:

- The gas bill is in your name and applies to a home that is your primary residence.
- No one else can claim you as a dependent on his/her income tax (other than your spouse).
- You verify your eligibility for CARE, if requested.
- You notify SDG&E within 30 days of any change in your eligibility.

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AGING & INDEPENDENCE SERVICES
COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO ■ HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

EDITOR: Denise Nelesen, LCSW
Phone: (858) 505-6474
Fax: (858) 495-5080

Thanks to a Vital Vial Volunteer

The Project CARE site at the Norman Park Center in Chula Vista would like to salute Tillie Lee, a six-year volunteer who has been vital in registering seniors for the Vial of Life program.



Tillie Lee

The vials are plastic pouches with magnets on the back that are placed on refrigerators. Inside are cards that seniors fill out with medical information, including their medications, name of doctor and other important health data. In times of emergency, paramedics are trained to look for the Vial of Life, which gives them a heads up about the person's health history, allergies, etc.

Tillie understands the value of these vials and carries them with her everywhere, registering bowling buddies, people in the grocery store, as well as residents of mobile home parks and senior residences.

Folks at the Norman Park Project CARE site say, "Her outreach in the community far surpasses what staff members are able to do with a limited budget. We are pleased to have her volunteer at our center."



Successful Volunteer Drive -- AARP California and Jewish Family Service of San Diego held a successful recruitment drive for volunteers to aid the JFS Fix-It Service, a free home safety and modification program for seniors, which is supported by a grant from the Family Caregiver Support Program of the County's Aging & Independence Services. Shown with tools donated by AARP are, from left, Ahnileen Martinez with AARP California; Melissa Dennison, coordinator of the JFS Fix-It Service; and Brenda Bothel, director of the JFS Community Older Adult Services. For more information about the program, call (619) 574-2597.

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In addition to CARE, utilities also have a program called FERA (Family Electric Rate Assistance). This is for households of three or more persons that have maximum incomes slightly higher than the qualifications for CARE, and provides a discount on electricity costs once energy usage reaches certain levels.

Another program that may be of help is called Medical Baseline. People with medical conditions requiring heat, air-conditioning or life-support equipment can get more energy at the lowest (baseline) rate. This program requires a physician's certification.

Applications for these programs can be downloaded from the SDG&E Web site: www.sdge.com, or call (800) 411-SDGE (7343) and ask that applications be sent to you.



Health and Information Fair -- Nadine Kaina with the Vista Project CARE participated in a health and information fair at the North Coast Church of Vista this summer. These events are great ways to tell people about the program. Shown above, My Linh Tran with the Outreach & Education Team for Aging & Independence Services fills a bag with Project CARE information and other material for a gentleman attending the event.

Send Us Your News

This Project CARE newsletter seeks contributions of stories, photos, etc., anything of interest to coordinators of Project CARE sites or those who wish to help seniors remain safely in their homes.

Send material to: Denise Nelesen, Aging & Independence Services, 9335 Hazard Way, San Diego, CA 92123. Or you can send an email to: denise.nelesen@sdcounty.ca.gov

**Next Project CARE meeting:
10 a.m. Jan. 16 at USA Federal Credit Union
9999 Willow Creek Rd., San Diego, 92131**